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AN EXTRAORDINARY PICTURE COLLECTION.

DURING the spring the customary re-arrangement of the loan collection was made at the Park, and the obelisk, now looking in at the Museum windows, seems to have stimulated the committee of artists to show that ancient bore that this is a new country. It is the first season that callow and school-boy works have been admitted; another season, look out for school-girl pictures, and studies from the round in two crayons. Messrs. Dielman and Alden Weir and J. G. Brown must have tender and gently "mollicoddling" hearts toward the babes in the nursery. This committee, knowing perfectly well what good art is, have thought fit to make the galleries the demonstration of their good-nature, not of their judgment. Last year the selection of American works was confined to such as had passed the test, had been greeted among painters with little wise nods—such works, in fact, as it was agreed would "do"—and we had Homer's "Confederates" and Sartain's "Italian Boy," and pictures in tone with those, so that every one was surprised to see how much quality there was in the best American painting, and the exclusiveness of the exhibition got noised across the water, and even "L'Art" said it was the best showing of our attainments yet made. This year the fence is down, and the young colts are leaping in, and it is hopeless to suppose that the Museum will be any more choice in future than an Academy exhibition. An aggressive and unforgettable part of the display is contributed by the noble world of the unheard-of, the embryonic, the yet-to-be. Let us respect these thumb-sucking heroes of the cradle: in them lies the hope of the future; but custom has assigned them an honorable and becoming support to hang to: it is the apron-string of the nurse, not the swinging publicity afforded by a hanging committee. This invasion from the nursery is as discouraging a feature as it is possible to imagine. The Museum loan ought to be a careful choice of approved work. It began on that theory, and made everybody sanguine. The day need not have come yet when proud professors were to lead in their prize scholars in the wreaths and best dresses of a school commencement. The Museum is for the canvases of men, not for semi-nary drawing-books.

What are the records of some of the exhibitors whose works are hung in conspicuous places in this supposed Walhalla of those who have conquered? Who has told of them, what stir have they made, and when were they admitted among artists of consideration? Who has heard of young Schuchardt, whose "Out in the Cold" is exhibited on the line, and resembles an abortive work of Mr. J. G. Brown? How came the unkindness to be done him of putting his work in pilory, when careful potting and then bedding and concentrated manuring is obviously the need of his doubtless fine germs for many a long day? And Frederick Church? We thought, heaven save the mark! that this bouffe-performer was still devising comic birds with bald heads and saucer eyes, supposed to be humorous exaggerations, for the ingenious fables of Mr. Hurlbert, and the like literary ephemera. Who expected to see him among the artists who are selected to teach the multitude? And Mr. Plumb, with his head called "Your Health!" When was this lad made a classic, and what is the lesson of his mechanical, tinny, airless style for mixed visitors trying to comprehend artistic standards? And Frank Fowler, whose "Bacchus" has a goitre? And poor Charles Temple Dix, who died, the worse luck, before he had lived, artistically speaking? He is represented by his "Beacon," and "Lateen Craft," and "Dicart Bay." Is the Museum a parlor album for the efforts of well-born amateurs? Shall rich society darlings, such as Dix and Jules Stewart and Augustus Heaton, be put forward into the society of athletes grown up in the gladiatorial schools, instead of being left to enjoy the sweeter tournaments of the carpet and the praises of ball-room belles?

These amateurs out of place are more than ridiculous, they are disquieting. The loan collections of such an institution as the Museum should be such as have passed the harshest and most cruel standards, and the ordeal before they assume their teaching function ought to be a terrible one. Every selection should show the chastened, proved seriousness of a work that has conquered for itself some lofty artistic success. And if the works from the juveniles are unsatisfactory, are they corrected by those of the elders, at least of all? What is the explanation of admitting such mature performances as

Loop's "Echo," and the "Cleopatra" of Henry Peters Gray, and T. Moran's composition of patches without a focus called "Communi-paw"? Who voted for the acceptance of G. Henry Hall's still-life, and the efforts of McCord and David Johnson?

Wandering through the galleries, in a temper which is necessarily stimulated at too many points to hostility, we certainly do stumble across works which strike us as exactly of the right kind for such a place—works which raise wholesome discussion or frank admiration. Whistler's "White Girl," an artist's tour de force and piece of bravado, is just the kind of déclassée experiment that one wants to see in a competition of technique. We do not wish to fight again the jousts of this woebegone tournament queen, whose battles have raged since 1862, and who treads so closely the bounds of the ridiculous in this mocking age of the æsthetic craze. Meaningless as one of Swinburne's verses, not condescending to be beautiful or even well-drawn, she takes a high station from the pure sensitiveness of her tones, the inlay of whites of different tint, and a sort of bloom of breathable air about her, a distinguished atmosphere which she carries with her wherever she goes. Even those who can see no sort of success in the principal figure are won over by the maestria with which the animal's head of the rug is painted, and acknowledge that the artist of that wondrous piece of still-life must have in him something more than they can comprehend. Whistler's "Coast of Brittany," too, is a thing well worth having and well worth learning from. When it was at the Academy, the sapient Academicians hung it over a door. Though the sky is rather raw, the treatment of the brown sea-sand is admirable, and that of the whispering and fluctuating sea is stamped with true poetry. Beside such a study of quality as the "White Girl" may be mentioned other efforts where technique is the aim, as Henner's little "Woman at the Fountain," and Bastien-Lepage's "Joan of Arc." The specimen of Henner belongs to a numerous class, and is only a study; it shows how, by artfully exaggerating the darkness of the relief, he can make human skin glow with a strange, unreasonable luminousness, so that you wonder if there is not some special light on his particular canvas. The flesh he represents is deficient in carnation, and has no suffusion of blood. Like cream viewed by moonlight, it spreads its thick unfurrowed breadth of pure "matte" splendor, most wonderfully rich and serene. This trifling example of his one talent is a lesson to painters—a lesson how to sacrifice everything boldly to the particular artistic effect desired. If your problem is to make goddess-flesh shine among the illexes, learn from the directness and from the rejections of this painter one way of attaining your object. Lepage's "Joan of Arc" is a problem of how to make a figure seem solid and real without any light and shade. Every trick of art is absent, yet the inspired girl stands as positive as iron while she is divine and epic in expression. The position of the foot shows with great ingenuity how the maiden has turned and turned, striving to fix the fleeting vision in an air that is full of apparitions. The orchard behind her is painted as never orchard was painted before, the tache of color being plainly and bravely set down wherever it occurred, with no attempt to force the perspective: thus near forms seem vague and out of focus, and distant forms seem near, as in the most courageous realism of a Japanese design, and the background forms a decoration of extreme interest if not of extreme beauty.

The large Clays of 1875 has a peculiar, luminous trick about the water, hard to get, and amounting almost to phosphorescence. Bunce's large "Venice" of 1879 is dreamy, with more soul about it than any Ziem, and wonderfully swathed in vapor. Twachtman's "Coast Scene" of the same year is admirable. Couture's self-portrait is thin and insufficient, a strange contrast to the terra-cotta hardness of Bonnat's likeness of President J. T. Johnston, the worst Bonnat we have ever seen, a brutal petrification unworthy the fame of a reputable painter. Speaking of Couture, there is a little copy of his "Decadence," which has managed to preserve all his silvery sweetness of color—a lucid gray tone touched here and there with delicious spots of vividness. Alden Weir's "Bretagne Interior" has been retained; it is a rich and marrowy treatment of a dark, scarce-illuminated den, very different from the iron hardness of our Hovendens and Edgar Wards in similar scenes. It harmonizes in a certain way with Munkácsy's singular and impressive treatment of a haying scene, where, though the hay is gray, the great truths

of values are broadly preserved. Eakins' "Chess-players," being portraits of his father and two friends, has been presented by the family to our Museum. Nothing he has done has been so unreservedly admired by artists. It requires a special lighting, being painted in a mistakenly low key; but treated fairly, and well flooded with light, it is found to equal in quality the very best Meissoniers; it is a great pity that this picture has never been sent to a Paris Salon, for our public believe in nothing that has not been consecrated by a French imposition of hands. Wylie's great unfinished Vendean scene, presented to the institution by Goupil, is a rich, sumptuous bit of grouping, though he would have made it richer and better had he lived. Take any head in it and compare it with Knaus's so-called "Solomonic" head of a rabbi-like patriarch, and see the latter's inferiority; yet Wylie has been called an imitator of Knaus!

There is a Breton, a twilight harvest scene with weary gleaners stretching their arms; Breton has done better, but the picture is a delicate eclogue. Morchard's "Salome" is picturesque and handsome, an ornamental "article de Paris." Casanova's disputing ecclesiastics are wittily treated of course, and graphic as the disputing Catholic and Methodist in Thackeray's account of Lord Steyne.

We are surprised and charmed to find an exceptionally beautiful "Fête Champêtre" of Watteau's lent to the collection; it is the property of Mr. Kountze. It appears to be quite as fine as the "Departure for Cythera" in the Louvre. As for the large and vaunted Murillo, the saint whose loaves change into flowers in his apron, it may be genuine, for the reason that the works of Murillo's boyhood did not tempt copyists. But it is hopelessly immature, pictorially worthless, and not such as would be admitted to any of the European museums of the first class.

We need not speak in detail of the drawings presented by Mr. Cornelius Vanderbilt, for they have already received critical attention in our columns, and with excellent reason been pronounced of very little value. Every curiosity shop of Paris, Florence, Rome, Naples, can bring out a horde of such old masters to offer to the American tourist. The St. Hubert, by Dürer, would be, if genuine, so immensely valuable that it would long since have been placed in the room of honor of a European gallery; it seems to be some pupil's study from the engraving. The Michael Angelos are inadmissible—a dreary travesty of his style, the recognizable husk instead of the kernel.

OUR MISMANAGED MUSEUM.

FIRST ARTICLE.

THE efforts put forth of late by the trustees of the Metropolitan Museum of Art to make the public believe their institution plays an important part in the education, not only of our own community, but of the whole country, show such a curious state of self-delusion on the part of these persons—for it is, of course, impossible they should not be sincere in what they say and print—as makes it imperative in those who do not share in this delusion to show why they think it is one.

If the statements made by the officers of the Museum as to the condition of the institution, and as to the esteem in which it is held by the people of our city, are to be taken for sober truth, then it follows that the museum is in a condition of high health, that it is not only contributing a vast deal to the actual pleasure of the people, but is practically useful, and therefore ought to be sustained not by private funds alone, but by a generous helping from the public purse.

The trustees say two things. First, we are told that, up to a certain point, the Museum at present is supplied with sufficient material for study in the arts of design to make it of immense practical value to workmen. Of course its deficiencies are many; its collections are incomplete, and its means of enlarging them are scanty; it needs money and generous assistance of all kinds. Still, more than two years ago, in May, 1879, we read in the report of the trustees the following cheering words: "The Metropolitan Museum of Art has already paid. It has paid during the past six years many hundred thousand dollars into the hands of workmen, women, and children in decorative employments unknown a few years ago, and in increased art industries many hundred thousand into the pockets of

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importers, merchants, manufacturers, and real-estate owners."

Such being the alleged condition of the Museum, in spite of all defects, we are next told that the people have known how to value the advantages offered them, and have proved their appreciation by flocking to the Museum in such numbers as to remember would dizzy the arithmetic of memory. In the report for May, 1879, we read that the number of visitors to the Museum during the year then ended was 29,932, of whom 26,137, were free visitors, and 3,795 paid for admission. In the report for May, 1880, we have only the number of visitors given for the thirty-seven days from the date of re-opening the Museum in the new building, April 1st, to May 9th, the day on which the report left the printer. The figures given for these thirty-seven days are 206,871, against 29,932 for the entire year previous when the Museum was in Fourteenth Street. The public swallowed this gratifying report with such complacency, it is no wonder it was thought right they should be rewarded with something still better. And, in fact, the report for May, 1881, assures us with pride that during the last thirteen months the attendance has been 1,200,373!

On what do the trustees found these impossible numbers? There is no machinery for keeping the tally—no turn-stile, no tickets (except, of late, on pay-days), no porters, other than the unruly boys with rough manners whose conduct has been so fruitful a source of complaint, particularly from ladies. The numbering, even supposing it to be taken at all, must be the merest guess-work, and now that the man who invented the system has given us the key to the cipher there is no longer any mystery about it. This man is really a wonderful fellow, as ingenious in combinations and as quick in invention as the director himself; he can make up an imposing daily report of figures out of a paltry dozen or so of visitors as adroitly as Di Cesnola himself can piece a "Bearded Venus" or an "Egyptian" statue out of a basketful of odds and ends of heads, feet, and shoulders, that never met in one body before. And yet he is a mere ignorant policeman, with only a heaven-taught skill in these numerical combinations:

"He lisped in numbers, for the numbers came;"

and, according to his own account, he became more and more skilful as he saw that the increasing weekly list (made up out of whole cloth) gave increased pleasure to the Director.

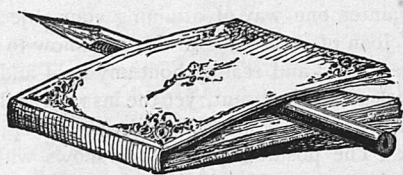
But, really, there was no need of calling up this informant, the facts spoke for themselves; and long before he had told what he knew, the untruthfulness of these astounding reports had become matter of private scandal. For a long time back several gentlemen in this city have been amusing themselves and their friends by applying all sorts of tests to the figures; calculating how many persons must have been standing on the threshold of the Museum every minute in the day; proving that, if these figures were true, every showcase in the galleries, upstairs and down, would have a row of spectators three deep ranged along the front of it all day; that if only every third visitor surrendered his cane or umbrella, parasol, and satchel, there would be no room for stacking them up, and it would require a force of several men to look after the checks. In fact, the returns cannot stand the least common-sense investigation; the numbers given are simply impossible; they only make the management of the Museum ridiculous; and perhaps no better comment on their fraudulent character is needed than the fact that as soon as *The Times* newspaper turned the light of its lantern upon these impudent numbers, they began to shrink, and under the fear of exposure they are growing small by degrees and every day beautifully less.

This is ridiculous enough, and one would think that men of the character of the trustees would wince under the exposure, and come out manfully and express their regret at having been so deceived themselves and at having been made tools of by their agents to deceive the public. But, no! they prefer to pose as injured innocents, and to stand on their dignity and sulk in silence. They behave about this charge as they do about Mr. Feuardent's charges. Unable to meet him with arguments two of the trustees run about town belaboring whoever has nothing better to do than to listen to them with arguments to prove that Mr. Feuardent's cards are forgeries. Another, who ought to know better, plies a fellow-trustee with arguments to show that in Card

No. 1 the two artotypes are taken, not from the same figure, but from two different ones. Yet even the *American Art Review*, which makes no admissions in Mr. Feuardent's favor without the greatest reluctance, says (May, 1881, p. 38), "if the attempt has really been made to discredit Mr. Feuardent's photograph as a forgery, the best friends of the Museum will grieve the most at such a false step." Yet, unless I am greatly misinformed, and I do not believe I am, this is exactly what Mr. J. Q. A. Ward is persistently doing at this very day; what Mr. Savage himself confessed to me he had himself done down to a very late hour, and what Mr. Robt. Hoe, Jr., is also doing as obstinately now as he did in the beginning.

So with the charge of publishing false returns of visitors. This charge has been publicly made, and it would certainly seem to require a public answer. But all that has been done by the trustees officially is to slowly reduce the numbers in their weekly reports, hoping to get down to a common-sense basis without being discovered by the public; and the only personal notice taken by them of the charge has been the visit of the two members of the board who have been most vicious in their defence of the Director, to one of the newspapers that has stood all along for a fair and open investigation, upon whose proprietor they urged a policy of silence as to these charges. They were assured that the newspaper in question was actuated in its course by no malice, and had only the good of the Museum at heart; that it had published only fact, and dealt only in arguments, and that if these gentlemen had anything to say in rebuttal of the charges made, the columns of the newspaper were open to them as freely as to the other side or that, if they wished to talk to a reporter, one should be sent to them. When their complaints and appeals for silence were met in this manly and open fashion, what did these trustees do? They declined either to print anything over their own names, or talk to a reporter. We may therefore dismiss the charges of false returns as confessed, and I have already shown the reason why these false returns were made. In another paper I shall proceed to show the absurdity of the claim set up by the trustees that the Museum is playing an important part in the development of the industrial arts among us. This claim has as little basis of truth as the report of a large attendance. The reason why so few artists and artisans do really go to the Museum to study is that there is but little for them to study when they get there.

CLARENCE COOK.



My Note Book.



GENERAL DI CESNOLA has betaken himself to Europe on "important business" for the Museum. A day or two before his departure suit was brought against him by Mr. Feuardent for defamation of character. It is possible that the worthy Director may find some plausible reason for not returning to this country, but in any event it is much to be hoped that the questions raised in the Di Cesnola-Feuardent controversy may be thoroughly sifted and settled before an impartial legal tribunal.

THE art lovers of Paris revelled recently in the Léopold Double sale of pictures, books, porcelain, rare furniture, and bric-à-brac of all sorts. M. Double, a highly polished gentleman with five centuries of noble ancestors and a long purse, spent fifty years in filling fourteen salons with five million francs' worth of art treasures. The times of Louis Quatorze, Quinze, and Seize specially attracted him, and his collections overflowed with souvenirs of these luxurious monarchs and their pleasure-loving courts. He was specially devoted to the Queen of Louis XVI., and was facetiously called

"Marie Antoinette's lover," one of his rooms being completely furnished, at great cost, with objects that had belonged to her. Its treasures included her bureau, her reclining-chair in rose satin, her lace coffer in Levantine morocco, a mahogany table, a diamond-encrusted clock, books, bronzes, porcelain, and Gobelins tapestries, besides the Dauphin's secretary and textbooks and his little arm-chair in sky-blue satin.

ANOTHER of M. Double's enchanted rooms was consecrated to a queen of the opera, Mdle. Duthé. "Its wainscoting, covered with amorous emblems, doves, quivers, roses, myosotis, the customary attributes of Cupid; the alcove, surrounded by mirrors; the mantel-piece of deep blue marble, with chasings of copper gilt executed by Gouthières; the furniture of white silk, with bouquets of roses, all was carried intact from the Chaussée d'Antin to the hotel of M. Double. The tongs 'fleurdelisées' reveal the name of the son of the gods who threw a shower of gold on this Danaë." It was the young Comte d'Artois, afterward Charles X., whom the lucky Mdle. Duthé bewitched into such ecstasies of decoration and furniture.

THE Sèvres possessed by M. Double included some extraordinarily fine pieces, among others the famous Louis XV. set, decorated with birds, which Buffon called his "Sèvres edition," and a pair of vases in "soft rose paste" representing the battle of Fontenoy. These are said to be the most beautiful Sèvres vases in existence; they were sold for \$34,000, and the Buffon service brought \$19,000. Another treasure worth a moderate fortune was Falconnet's superb white marble clock, a vase surrounded by the three graces, of whom Diderot wickedly remarked: "Elles montraient tout sauf l'heure."

WHILE the proposal to open the Metropolitan Museum on Sundays for the benefit of the artisan and workingmen is severely frowned down by the most influential trustees as a violation of the sanctity of the Sabbath, it is interesting to notice that on Easter Sunday a loan exhibition was opened in Whitechapel—the lowest quarter in London—with the declared approval of the vicar, the Rev. S. A. Barnett. This sensible clergyman observed that he had heard it said that art was not gospel, and that Sunday opening was desecration; but his motives were religious: ninety-five per cent of the population of East London went to no place of worship, and it seemed to him a matter of religion to open this exhibition in order to appeal to some of these. Art could not take the place of God, but it could prepare the ground for religion, and he hoped that art exhibitions would ultimately fill all schools at holiday times.

ABOUT a year ago I suggested to our photographers that it might pay them to produce pictures to be inserted in panels for doors and cabinets. I see that this very thing has just been done in London with great success. Vernon Heath's "Glimpses of Nature in Panels," framed in dark red velvet, are described as admirable, and especially in favor for decoration of yacht cabins, where space is much restricted.

"POLITICAL POTTERY" is being revived in England. Messrs. Mortlock have lately produced a triple-handled "tyg" of brown Doulton ware, designed to commemorate the return, for the first time in the history of the county, of six Liberal members for the West Riding of Yorkshire. Political pottery would be a new thing in this country. Why should not the managers of the State elections consider its merits over those of fireworks and torchlight processions? In New Jersey, for instance, the Trenton potteries might be kept busy next fall in turning out plates and mugs with the portraits of rival candidates for office. A piece of useful political crockery would not soon be destroyed in the workman's little home. There are great possibilities in this suggestion; but if any of the political parties should act upon it and overrun the country with indestructible portraits of unworthy candidates, doubtless I shall be very sorry for having made it.

MONTEZUMA.